



THE NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

# Reviewing Stand

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### **Are Public Officials Adequately Paid?**

A radio discussion over WGN and the Mutual Broadcasting System

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**THE REVIEWING STAND** is a weekly radio forum presented by Northwestern University. The program was first broadcast by Station WGN, Chicago, October 14, 1934. It has been on the air continuously since that time, originating in the WGN studios, and, since 1935, carried by stations of the Mutual Broadcasting System. **THE REVIEWING STAND** presents members of the Northwestern University faculty and distinguished guests from business, government, education, and the press in round table discussions of contemporary problems—the questions that are in the news. The program is under the direction of James H. McBurney, Dean of the School of Speech, Northwestern University, and Miss Myrtle Stahl, Director of Educational Programs, WGN, Chicago.

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# Are Public Officials Adequately Paid?

**MR. MCBURNEY:** Our speakers today are Francis A. Allen, Associate Professor of Law, The School of Law, Northwestern University; Herbert Emmerich, Director, Public Administration Clearing House, Chicago, and Roland Young, Professor of Political Science, Northwestern University.

Gentlemen, let's come directly to our question—Are public officials adequately paid? What would you say to that, Mr. Emmerich?

## 'The High Positions'

**MR. EMMERICH:** We need to know what public officials we are talking about. By and large, the men occupying great responsibility have not been paid adequately in my view. However, you have to distinguish between people like the President of the United States, Cabinet officers, members of the House, and members of the Senate in Washington. You also have to take into consideration the elected officials of the states in the state legislatures and the rank and file of civil service appointees. Although we lag a little bit with respect to increasing prices, the rank and file have been increasingly well paid. There are, of course, some exceptions to this; but we have tended to underpay the people who occupy the high positions, members of Congress, governors, and other elected officials.

**MR. MCBURNEY:** How about the members of Congress and other elected officials of that order? Should we concern ourselves primarily with them, Mr. Young?

**MR. YOUNG:** I would say that the salaries of state legislators are generally inadequate, that the states do not provide sufficient facilities. As for Congressmen, I should say that they are quite well paid. They receive enough to have a fairly high standard of living, although not as high as the

wives of the Congressmen feel they should have for lavish living.

**MR. ALLEN:** While I certainly do not believe that all of the problems involving the efficiency or integrity of government can be solved by simply raising the salaries of public officials, I do believe that we do not pay our public officials enough, both at the state and federal levels, and that this is more of a problem than subsidizing an extravagant social life on the part of the Congressman's wife.

## Elected Officials

**MR. EMMERICH:** In answer to your question, McBurney, I would say that the discussion might very well be centered principally on the question of elected officials—members of Congress and the like. Those are the jobs which have been very much in the public eye of late and those are the jobs in policy-determining positions.

I think that it is wrong to suggest that public officials should or do live in great luxury. They do not. The problem is rather to lift them from a certain anxiety, worry and pressures, wherein they take on certain outside interests, which they really should not do in the light of their public responsibilities. The members of Congress have been going down in compensation and not going up. I don't believe that we want a standard of luxury and lavish living in public office, but we do want a level of compensation which will permit them to concentrate on their public jobs without pressure for seeking other sources of income.

**MR. YOUNG:** There is a great deal in what you say and I would tend to agree. On the other hand, we must not feel that by giving Congressmen more money that we can relieve them of anxiety. You do have a situation with regard to an elected public official which you do not have in con-

nection with an appointed official. The government pays him his salary, but he is also responsible to his constituents, to the party which put him in power, to the extent that they pay some of his expenses. The real question, I think, is not whether they receive enough salary, but how much compensation comes from these various other sources, what the rule should be, whether we should attempt to limit some of these expenditures and control the sources rather than increase the Congressman's salary.

### 'Decrease in Living Standard'

MR. ALLEN: I think that it might be well to mention what has happened to Congressmen's salaries during this period of inflation and high taxes. A recent issue of a national magazine indicated a study of just that. While I would not personally vouch for the accuracy of these statements, I feel that they are substantially correct.

It is shown, for example, that in the thirteen year period between 1939 and 1952, although there has been an increase in the dollar amount of the salary of the members of Congress, when you take into account the reductions of living standards brought about by high prices and taxes, actually that dollar amount represents a decrease of one-third in the living standard supplied by the salary in 1952 as compared to the salary in 1939.

I think it must also be pointed out that there are certain extraordinary problems that members of Congress have. They have the problem of maintaining two homes, traveling expenses and the like.

MR. YOUNG: Although all of that is true, we can also say that the cost of campaigning has increased during that period, but raising the salary will not answer that at all. I think the real issue is the extent to which the government is responsible for a Congressman's salary in campaigning, the extent to which it should subsidize his office expenses so that he can add to his personal popularity, and the

extent to which the government is responsible for his continuing a relatively high standard of living. In other words it is foolish to say that a Congressman should have the standard of living of a Washington hostess, an ambassador, or a lobbyist for a great corporation. He does not have to compete with men who have salaries of that nature.

MR. McBURNEY: Mr. Emmerich, do you agree with that?

### Financial Worry

MR. EMMERICH: I certainly do, but let me say that they don't. I have very frequently eaten dinners which have been cooked and served by a Congressman's wife in a very simple home.

I don't believe that most of them, unless they are men of great private means, want to or do live on that high standard. There was a survey made in New York back in February and most Congressmen answered that particular questionnaire. The questionnaire indicated almost a universal worry over personal financial problems and a feeling that it reduced their efficiency to the point where Congressmen were forced to resort to lectures and other means to earn extra money on the outside. There is a constant limitation being put in their way by virtue of the fact that they are living, temporarily while in the public eye, on deficit spending and having to borrow money.

The present compensation of a Congressman is \$12,500 annually. In addition to that he has a nontaxable fund of \$2500, which makes a total compensation of \$15,000 per year. He also has a travel allowance for one round trip per session to his home, and he has a stationery allowance for supplies and his office expense.

MR. McBURNEY: You don't think that is enough?

MR. EMMERICH: Grossly inadequate for the job that he is supposed to do.

MR. McBURNEY: How would that



salary compare with the salary of a man doing a comparable job in private industry?

**MR. EMMERICH:** It would be much less, and I also think that it is costing the country money to pay its Congressmen so little. We should not only look at the analysis of the political part of the job but also at an analysis of the legislative and representational function.

The modern Congressman, unlike those conceived by the founding fathers, is involved in a full time job. They are spending a large per cent of their time in Washington. They are detached from their private law practices or other businesses—which was not true in ages past. The problems of government put an enormous burden on these people, for they have to make appearances on the floor, answer mail from constituents and do many other things. The modern Congressman is a full time employee. He serves on various standing committees and does other legislative work.

### What Is Function of Government?

**MR. YOUNG:** I will agree with what you say, but I think that you have given the wrong emphasis. We are interested in good legislators—we are interested in having them have good salaries, and we should also say that the cost of being a Congressman has vastly increased. However, our problem is, what is the function of the government with regard to all of this?

Everybody will agree that these Congressmen should have a reasonable standard of living—perhaps the salary is not now adequate—however, I believe that we should also look at two other areas. The first is compensation of office and clerical help and the other is the cost of campaigning.

The very fact that a Congressman or Representative is in office for only two years adds to this anxiety. He is always running for office and no amount of money that the federal government can give is going to relieve this anxiety.

If we want Congressmen to be less

worried and more secure, I think that the solution lies in other directions. But so long as we have the present system, we can say that the amount of money the federal government gives a Congressman for clerical assistance, for his office help, telephone and travel expense, is quite adequate. All of this, I should say, does assist a Congressman in keeping in office and to that extent should in part be considered as a federal contribution toward a Congressman running for office and staying in office. To that extent it gives the man in office a considerable advantage over the man not in office.

**MR. McBURNEY:** You think that the salary should not cover the cost of political activity?

**MR. YOUNG:** I think that we ought to divide if we can, these three sources of expenditures: the kind that the man himself is responsible for, the kind that the government is responsible for, and the kind the smaller public, the party or whoever contributes, is responsible for. They should be known, and to some extent they should be limited. These things should be controlled or defined and the names of the people who contribute should be published.

### 'In Touch with Home'

**MR. EMMERICH:** There is one function included in your list, Young, which seems to me a very important function of a representative of a state or district, and that is keeping in touch with his home community.

A Congressman has to be in Washington for such long periods of time that he may lose contact with the sentiment at home. It seems to me a proper charge on the public budget that he be permitted to visit his home community frequently and that he have plenty of opportunity to communicate with the citizens at home—not only with his party but with the entire population of his home community. The present allowance of a Congressman for this sort of thing is very inadequate at the present time and he has to finance that in other ways.

MR. YOUNG: I would have no objection to a Congressman spending some time in his home town, but if it is necessary to subsidize additional travel, he should support that. We do not want a Congressman to feel that he must have a high standard of living in Washington and that Washington is his permanent home—that he must be re-elected and that he must continue to live there. I should be all in favor of more and more contact between him and his constituents. That was the theme of the Reorganization Act of 1946. It was presumed then that Congressional sessions would last no more than seven or eight months, giving a Congressman more time to spend in his own district.

MR. McBURNEY: Who is going to pay for that, Mr. Young?

MR. YOUNG: As far as the travel is concerned—if he needs to make an extra trip or two—I think that the federal government might well pay for that. We are not talking so much about travel, that is not the major item. We are talking in part about the extra advantage that a Congressman will have from having a very large clerical staff, from having the franking privilege and the privilege of republishing parts of the Congressional record at cost. In other words, merely adding to his office expenses will not do away with the anxiety that was mentioned.

MR. McBURNEY: Allen wants to say something.

### 'Other Means'

MR. ALLEN: I think we are suggesting that there are certain aspects of the problem of becoming a Congressman which can better be handled by means other than increasing his salary. I would like to have a little more specific discussion of what those ways and means might be. I think there is a problem here, to a degree, of revealing the sources of income for political purposes. We have suggested an effort to control expenditures for political campaigns, and I would like to hear these other two gentlemen

here suggest some specific means that might be taken to solve this problem.

MR. McBURNEY: Let me rephrase the question just a bit differently. Is it proper, in your judgment, for a Congressman to accept funds from outside sources—from a group of businessmen in his community or from any source whatsoever—in order to cover some of these activities which you think are not properly covered by his salary?

MR. YOUNG: That depends on who gives it and for what purpose the money is given. He is essentially a civilian. He is a public official for a short time and then he will return to a civilian status. You cannot cut off all contact between the man and his background. He is a representative and as such he is supported in part by private groups.

What we want to do, if possible, it seems to me, is to draw a line at which a Congressman receives funds from private sources for political support or perhaps for his own personal support. What is the rule? The rule should be that the funds that are given should have no direct relationship with what the Congressman does. You don't want a Congressman in power who feels that he owes his support to a particular group who will influence his decisions.

### 'Full Disclosure'

MR. EMMERICH: I would agree with that, but it seems to me that if a Congressman gets funds other than for conducting a political campaign in an election year and gets them in between times, then one of the important matters from the public standpoint is full disclosure. Matters in public life require disclosure, and this is indeed a public matter. However, I don't think that most Congressmen or Senators have access to such funds. Many of these people have testified that even in political years it is very difficult to raise the necessary funds for their re-election and that very frequently their families have to make great sacrifices to maintain these funds.



MR. McBURNEY: I take it that you have no objection to such contributions if they are fully reported?

MR. EMMERICH: If there is full disclosure of the purposes and sources of them I would say that I see no objection.

MR. McBURNEY: Should this disclosure include an accounting of personal income?

### Rule of Privacy

MR. EMMERICH: I think that introduces a difficult problem. It seems that we are then impinging on what is known as the privacy of the American citizen. I see no reason why the man running for public office should not have the same protection of privacy of strictly private affairs as anyone else. This should be the case unless he is accused of wrongdoing, in which case he may have to make a disclosure of income that may be deemed to be improper. However, as a general rule, it seems to me that the rule of privacy should prevail; the Congressman or Senator should regard his personal estate as something between his conscience and the Internal Revenue Department.

MR. McBURNEY: Do you all agree?

MR. YOUNG: I would agree on the whole, and I think that our legal institutions are adequate for that. We perhaps have not adequately worked out principles and methods of reporting sources of funds for a private individual in office.

MR. ALLEN: It seems to me that it may be difficult as a practical matter to make the rigid sort of distinction between contributions for political purposes and contributions to the personal income of the Congressman.

Of course, the income tax return will not solve the problem that we are talking about here. The Congressman still pays income or gift taxes on the contributions to his personal income; however, that would not indicate that he still was not under ob-

ligations to give personal favors to the persons that provided that income. Therefore, it seems to me that if we say that under no circumstances or only under extraordinary circumstances is a Congressman under an obligation to make public disclosure of private gifts, that we may be opening up a method of evading the whole purpose and spirit of this attempted regulation.

### A Second Salary?

MR. McBURNEY: Do you think, Allen, that it is proper for a man to continue a private income after he is elected to public office? I am now thinking of the member of a law firm that is elected to public office or a man who is in the insurance business, a man who is drawing a second salary from these private sources.

MR. ALLEN: That is a very difficult problem. Certainly, as to practice, it is clear that many Congressmen do maintain private business connections, either in a law firm, insurance firm, or in some other fashion. Probably the origin of that practice is that from times past the legislator's job has been a part time job and thus he has had to maintain some kind of a private business. It is also clear that the situation may create conflicts of interest between the legislator as a legislator and the legislator as a private businessman, and that it may be necessary to impose restrictions which go beyond the private ethical standards of the legislator. I would say, however, that before the public has a right to demand what may be a higher level of ethical conduct here, that it should be very sure that it has performed its obligation of providing a decent standard of living for the man in the legislature.

MR. McBURNEY: And you question whether that is being done?

MR. EMMERICH: I think that we should also point out here that it has always been the theory of elected legislators, whether national, state or local, that they are part time officials, and that it has also been the

opinion since the beginning of the republic that it is highly proper that they can carry on their own businesses. I think that this is particularly a difficult problem in the national legislature where the job of Congressman has tended to become a full time job.

Of course, most members of Congress have been people in self-employed professions. It is very difficult for an officer of a corporation to get a leave of absence to run for Congress. It is very difficult for a man who is not able to determine his own time to run for Congress. This is to me, a difficult problem today, and it seems to me that no legislation will catch up with it. It is a question of the quality of the people that we send to Washington.

### State Officials

MR. MCBURNEY: This discussion that we have been having with regard to retaining private employment while in office suggests a whole new area to me that we really haven't gotten into. We have been talking mainly about Congressmen, but how about other public officials, those on the state level?

MR. EMMERICH: As far as the rules go, whether federal, state or local, the full time official in the executive branch should have the same privileges as the Congressman. He is forced to give all of his time to public work. If he is a lawyer or insurance man, he should dissociate himself from that business and not enjoy any of the profits from it while in public office. He should devote himself entirely to his primary purpose, his public work, and he should be compensated in a way that will make that possible.

MR. MCBURNEY: Are we compensating these people, other than Congressmen, adequately?

MR. EMMERICH: At the top levels, where men have to take great responsibility, we are not. Public salaries are lagging behind other salaries. They are lagging behind the

increased cost of living and it is getting harder and harder to get first rate men to render public service.

MR. YOUNG: As for the state level, I would say that perhaps legislators are not paid enough in most states. I also would say that most states do not provide adequate facilities for legislators to do their jobs properly—they do not provide sufficient staffs and sufficient clerical help and sufficient printed material that the legislators can use in doing their job. To some extent they are dependent upon state organizations, Chambers of Commerce, and private organizations of one kind and another to do their jobs adequately. Therefore, in most states, the elected, and appointed officials also, should receive more attention, more consideration from the states than they have.

MR. MCBURNEY: There is one question that I am sure will occur to a good many of our listeners. If the salaries of these legislators are as inadequate as has been stated, why don't the legislators do something about it? After all, it is within their own power to increase their own salaries.

### Political Restraint

MR. ALLEN: Obviously there is a political restraint on legislators' raising their own salaries, and this action is likely to be misunderstood by their constituents. Furthermore, there is a general tendency for the legislature to lag behind needs with reference to salaries, not only of the legislators themselves, but of all people who work for the government.

MR. EMMERICH: I think that for the members of Congress there should be a basic salary of \$20,000 or \$25,000 and an escalator clause which would permit salaries to go up when the cost of living goes up, and down when it goes down.

MR. YOUNG: I don't think that the Congressmen should be rewarded for their own folly and failure to control prices.



MR. McBURNEY: You take exception to that?

MR. YOUNG: I don't think that the escalator clause should be included in any salary arrangement. I think that it would be well for the Congressman to be heckled by his wife occasionally on rising cost.

MR. EMMERICH: I would like to

close with a quotation from Mr. Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania. In one of his writings he said: "It is a dishonor to government that its officers should live off benevolence as it ought to be infamous for officers to dishonor the public by being twice paid for the same business." He also said, "Men must have public minds as well as salaries or they will serve private individuals at public cost."



# Suggested Reading



Compiled by William Huff,  
and M. Helen Perkins, Reference Department,  
Deering Library, Northwestern University.

BOLLES, EDMUND B. *How to Get Rich in Washington; Rich Man's Division of the Welfare State.* Norton & Co., New York, 1952.

A summary and analysis of the Congressional Investigating Committee findings regarding recent mishandling of finances and other "misdeeds" of federal administrative agencies; cites names of individuals and cities, dates, and amounts involved.

BONE HUGH A. *American Politics and the Party System.* McGraw, New York, 1950.

A general book attempting to answer some of the more common questions asked in regard to politics and party systems.

DOUGLAS, PAUL H. *Ethics in Government.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1952.

Surveys the state of morality in public service in the past, comparing the ethics used by business with those used by government, and discussing and offering a solution regarding the financing of election campaigns, with emphasis on the effect of their costs to the taxpayer.

RIDLEY, CLARENCE E. and others, ed. *The Municipal Year Book, 1952.* International City Manager's Association, Chicago, 1952.

A resumé of municipal activities in America, including tables of comparative salaries for various city officials.

U. S. Congress. House of Representatives. Select Committee on Lobbying Activities. *Report and Recommendations on Federal Lobbying Act.* 81st Congress, 2nd Session, House Report 3239. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1951.

Evasion of the law in the securing of funds for political propaganda is practiced in lobby activities, as examples in this report show.

U. S. Congress. House of Representatives. Special Committee to Investigate Campaign Expenditures. *Report . . .* 81st Congress, 2nd Session, House Report 3252. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1951.

Recent investigations show an increase in campaign expenditures by Congressional candidates in the 1950 primaries from what was spent in the general election.

*American City* 67:7, Je., '52. "Salaries of Chief City Officials Increase 5 to 15 Per Cent."

A brief article giving a table of salaries of municipal officers for 1952 in cities of 10,000 to 25,000 and 50,000 to 100,000.



*Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 283:122-6, Sept., '52. "Present Party Organization and Finance." D. E. McHENRY.

Present federal laws relative to campaign finances are not realistic in terms of present party organization.

*Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 283:172-40, Sept., '52. "Campaign Methods of Today." H. A. BONE.

A report on the various phases of communication and types of approach used in the present campaign.

*Colliers* 130:24-7, Sept. 20, '52. "How Much Does Your Vote Cost?" R. BENDINER.

Facts and figures pointing out that successful political campaigning today requires millions of dollars, but political candidates are limited to low expenditures established by old laws; the result is that some candidates evade the law to secure adequate funds for their campaigns.

*Congressional Digest*. 31:128, Apr. '52. "The Federal Pay Roll—Its Evolution, Its Size, Its Meaning."

An analytical survey of the federal pay roll, divided into the following sections: "Evolution of the Federal Pay Roll;" "Congress and the Pay Roll Today;" "Is the Federal Pay Roll Menacing Basic American Interests?"

*Monthly Labor Review* 74:416-17, Apr., '52. "Wage Chronology: Federal Employees Classification Act, 1951."

Tables of general salary changes and basic federal salary ranges by grade, 1949-51, and related wage practices.

*State Government* 22:48-9, Feb., '49. "Annual Maximum Salaries of State Administrative officials as of January 15, 1949."

A table giving the annual maximum salaries of state administrative officials as of January 15, 1949.

*Town Meeting* p. 1-3, Jan. 8, '52. "How Can We Fight Corruption in Government?" P. H. DOUGLAS and A. WILEY.

The text of a radio discussion on the various factors which are involved in the corrupt practices of public officials who are pressed by financial problems in the maintenance of political activities and their way of life.

*United States News and World Report* 33:20-1, Oct. 10, '52. "Why Public Jobs Are Hard to Fill."

Although the salaries of federal, state, and municipal government workers are higher than they were a decade ago, the actual buying power of the dollar has caused their living standards to go down, as shown in the table comparing 1939 living standards of municipal, state, and federal officials with those of today.



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